

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Select Board meeting of July 12, 2005
Meeting called to order by Ms. Awad at 4:04 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Awad, Hubley, Kusner
Weiss, Greeney absent
Del Castilho, Pacunas, Musante,
Calvin Brower, Rebecca Goldstein, Ken Mosakowski? others?

SELECT BOARD'S ACTION

Comcast I-Net Drop Location

VOTED: _ Hubley, Kusner voted "Aye", Awad "No", to sign the Town Common I-Net Drop Location Agreement with Comcast and to defer approval of the expenditures of the funds to a future meeting.

WORK MEETING

Ms. Awad commented that the Select Board has been holding extra work meetings on important Town issues. She explained that the meetings were more conversational than usual, exercising free exploration and discussion of complex topics, and not expected to lead to immediate votes.

Ad Hoc Committee On North Amherst Land

Mr. Hubley distributed a DRAFT Charge for the proposed committee. He explained that he had compiled his own thoughts with those of others who had sent notes or with whom he had spoken. He asked that everyone feel perfectly free to add, change or delete.

Mr. Kusner observed that the charge limited the considerations of the committee to only those parcels specified in the Special Town Meeting Article 2. Ms. Awad said the committee would need to consider at least the surrounding parcels. Mr. Kusner urged that we designate additional abutting parcels to be considered.

Considering the qualifications of potential committee members, Mr. Kusner recommended that it would be useful to include members familiar with the history of student activities in the neighborhood.

Ms. Awad felt it would be important for the committee to analyze and evaluate the JPI proposal, reserving the final decision for the Select Board.

At this point in the discussion the Select Board made the following decision:

VOTED unanimously to accept the committee charge for the Ad Hoc Committee on North Amherst Land.

Mr. Brower urged that the committee be allowed to discuss the JPI plan with the proponents. Mr. Kusner observed that that suggestion raises the question of openness of potential negotiations.

Committee recruitment

Mr. Kusner recommends that the committee include a representative from Rolling Ridge Road if there is no inherent conflict of interest. Ms. Awad asked Mr. Del Castilho to send out a notice to Town committees that are

involved in this endeavor for them to suggest members to serve on the committee. Mr. Kusner cautioned that we pay careful consideration to the Open Meeting Law during the process of recruitment, and in balancing the respect for privacy with the need for openness. Ms. Awad asked SB members to call and discuss the committee task with likely member candidates. Mr. Del Castilho stated that he presumed Mr. Weiss would be involved in the selection and appointment of committee members.

Budget Process

Ms. Awad reviewed that there has been ongoing discussion seeking improvements in the way the Town develops the annual budgets, seeking to make the budget more satisfying in the end.

Mr. Kusner inquired about the meeting to be held Friday, July 15, to start this year's budget process. Ms. Awad stated that it is intended to be a meeting of the chairs of the Finance Committee, the School Committee and the Select Board. Ms. Awad said it is planned to discuss how better to engage the various boards, departments and committees in the budget process.

Mr. Kusner stated that he could not attend the meeting, and so would like to offer some observations. He stated that much of the budget discussion centers on 'want' than 'need'. He observes there is too little disciplined recognition of the limits imposed by the actual Town income. He urged more discipline and asked if that matter will be discussed. He asked, further, if the meeting would consider the possible necessity of budget reductions this year.

Mr. Musante suggested that the meeting should encourage more joint financial planning, especially in regard to 'discretionary spending.'

Mr. Kusner advised that there might be a need to consider 'radical' changes in discretionary spending this year.

Mr. Hubley recommended that the Select Board and the Finance Committee consider scheduling combined hearings with the various Town departments. He observed that the result might produce more compatible understanding of the finances of the Town, and further more agreement on outcomes. He emphasized the need to spend more time discussing major budget items, especially those where there is some flexibility, some degree of choice. He recommended that the Town Manager and the Select Board work together to prepare the hearing process, considering and deciding together the priorities for what budget items are more worthwhile, and what items are less, for discussion. He suggested that more fruitful decisions might be made in a more disciplined schedule.

Mr. Kusner recommended more scrutiny of discretionary items, and more consideration of consequences.

Mr. Del Castilho suggested that needs and essentials be put on the table for consideration without prior commitment.

Town Manager Recruitment

Mr. Del Castilho said the SB must decide whether to follow the more typical approach or consider options tailored to the specific concerns of Amherst. He questioned the need for a head-hunter, or whether the SB would do better to do the recruitment work. He recommended a compact schedule, and provided a sample draft. He stated that the draft schedule provided plenty of opportunity for flexibility. He said that we must draft advertisements announcing the position opening, and urged that they be ready by mid-August for circulation early in September. He affirmed that the Select Board would be involved and responsible in every step of the process, and in the final selection.

Ms. Awad suggested that a score sheet be developed to enable Sb member to score individual applicants separately, assembling the result in the Select Board office. Mr. Del Castilho observed that other Select Boards sometimes appoint a search committee.

Mr. Kusner raised for consideration the meta-question of 'How to decide how to decide.' He suggested the SB give careful consideration of the best way to select criteria, and to seek guidance from the public. Ms. Awad suggested that perhaps it would be good to arrange for citizens to interview candidates and advise the SB.

Mr. Kusner suggested that the SB resolve a small set of discerning questions, and that these be disseminated to elicit responses from the broad community. Mr. Hubley observed that we might take cues from the example of the Comprehensive Planning Committee.

Mr. Del Castilho advised that we give careful attention to costs, possible travel to investigate candidates in their home communities, the character of advertising the SB might choose, what kind of material to be sent to applicants, considering that the Amherst Town Government Act is essentially "the job description".

ADJOURNMENT

VOTED unanimously to adjourn at 6:05 p.m.